

Jiminy Cricket's Environmentality Challenge

For immediate release

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JIMINY CRICKET SURPRISES 5TH GRADE CLASS AT MIANO ELEMENTARY

LOS BANOS, CA, April 9, 2002 -- What do 30 elementary students from Los Banos in Merced County, storm drains and a favorite cartoon character have in common? A Grand Prize winning project in Jiminy Cricket's Environmentality Challenge. This statewide competition is designed to promote "environmentality" — thinking and acting environmentally — among elementary school students. Teacher Stephanie Sparks and her multi-age class of fourth and fifth graders from Miano Elementary received top honors for their wetland preservation project during a surprise visit by Jiminy Cricket; Tricia Broddrick, Director of the Office of Integrated Education for the California Integrated Waste Management Board/California Environmental Protection Agency; and Kris McNamara, Director of Corporate Environmental Programs and Policy - The Walt Disney Company.

The Miano Elementary students were among 91,100 students from 3,000 classes who participated in this year's Environmentality Challenge. The class impressed judges with their community-based environmental education project, "Every Wetland Counts." As part of this project, the class developed a wetlands website, stenciled storm drains and distributed door hangers throughout the city to educate the community about how harmful waste dumped down storm drains can be to wetlands.

The students also created a mural with a wetlands theme, presented before the city council and distributed wetlands information at the Central Valley's "Wild on Wetlands" weekend-long event in March.

For their efforts, the students will receive a "Jiminy" award May 9 at a special celebration in their honor in Anaheim. Presenting the award will be Roy E. Disney, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors at The Walt Disney Company, and Delaine Eastin, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Also attending the celebration will be Winston Hickox, Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency; William J. Lyons, Jr., Secretary of the Department of Food and Agriculture; and Mary Nichols, Secretary of the Resources Agency.

This is the second Grand Prize win for students of Los Banos teacher Stephanie Sparks. Two years ago, Ms. Sparks' students impressed judges with a project entitled "Our Tree Project."

Students worked with Tree City USA to learn about the important role that trees play in the environment and then held a walkathon to raise money to purchase and plant a tree for each student in the class. The students planted their trees along the Central California Irrigation District Canal as a way to contribute to the beauty and protection of the environment in their community.

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The Environmentality Challenge, first launched in 1994, is a partnership between The Walt Disney Company and the State of California's Environmental Education Interagency Network (CEEIN). CEEIN includes representatives from the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Education, the Department of Food and Agriculture and the Resources Agency. The Environmentality Challenge encourages students to complete projects that target real-world environmental challenges. The projects must be planned and created entirely by children.

To date, nearly 360,000 children have participated in the Challenge. Teachers interested in this program can request educational materials from CEEIN to develop environmentally related curricula using the four California Content Standards.

For more information about the Challenge, contact Tricia Broddrick at 916- 341-6765.

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